

A boat, a chair,
a camper the woman is staring into,
one hand holding the back door open, thinking
what to cook for supper.

The man
on his spine in a patio chair, hip
boots, hat down over his eyes, open chest
of tackle alongside, & two rods.

The child
squatting by the beached aluminum boat skipping
stones across the thin water.

I can see
the danger. They have wandered la-de-da
into that open zone. They have driven their camper
with all their lashed gear & belongings
down onto, out into that enormous field. They are
without

protection. Don't they know
that the unending December sky can't see them?
That it's up there with such immensity
that a fleet of Ford Camper Trucks, of Ward's
Lite-Wate Six Foot Fishers, all fully equipped,
with crowds of humanity to match would fall
equally dead center of the sky's blindness?

Can't they see
that that vast dry bank belongs to the flood to come?
That even a naked man in a desert stands no chance?
What's the matter with those people?

From where I sit,
they seem propped in the dark of something so empty, so
killing, so inhuman, I want to

warn them. We need
something to redeem our desolation,
some counter-immensity, some enemy-space we can
pit against this emptiness.

Or I would
have us all stones. Here & now. Us
& all our belongings turned into stones.
Stones in the dry rivers.
Stones in the bellies of fishes.
Stones in the deepest trenches of the oceans. Stones
heavy as planets yielding finally
to the anti-gravity of the sky.

Mother's Little Loser

Coming back from Reno, your son the loser,
alone in the car, no money, no hope, no hurry,
a rotten kid gone & done a bad thing again,

I cry out loud your name
in the plush upholstery like a knife, your name

against the locked windows like a fist. As in a nightmare
I scream at you
to forget, for once, about that big deal death of yours

& come to me,
sit beside me & talk to me, keep me
company back to Berkeley. "Look at me," I beg you,
tears rolling down the Sierra Watershed to the Pacific

(at precisely the speed limit, I suddenly notice!)

Oh, boy! You see how it goes,
why there's no pulling off the road,
the chance you take

of getting caught
in a laughing jag
& having to tell
the investigating officer
("...subject was apprehended in the act of catharsis...")

the joke: that as long as you obey the law, then
no matter hell or high water,
there's not a cop in the universe can touch you.

-- Donald Schenker

Berkeley CA

Make It Or

Been working up to
here last 14 years.
Now it's make
it or break it.
Woman who believes
in me has been
gazing out sides
of her eyes lately.
Dead weary of talent
& promise.
Faith wears only so
long same as love.

Xmas Is Over

His parents have gone home.
They lie in bed
both nite lamps on.
She's balanced far
over on her side afraid
of catching his flu.
It's late. She dozes....
He considers touching her.
Knows not too.
She jerks violently.
What's wrong he asks.
I fell she says.